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the course he took, yet when he claims that we ought to hear no more of this "debt to Ireland," save, of course, from the lips of the Irish agitator or American demagogue, he exhibits an ignorance or an impudence for which he should occasionally, at least, be snubbed. Like *Dick Deadeye*, "he means well, but he don't know." When he learns more of the real history of the country, he will have less to say. And I do not even despair of having him an Irish-American champion. Did not the study of Irish history make a Home Ruler of Mr. Gladstone? In the face of that conversion shall we despair of so ripe a historical scholar and investigator as Mr. Duffield Osborne? Perish the thought! But he must abjure Froude and Bancroft, at least on Irish topics.

THOS. F. MEEHAN.

## II.

### A PLEA FOR THE PAGAN HINDOO.

*An Open Letter to the Rev. Henry M. Field, D. D.*

REVEREND SIR: In your open letter to Colonel Ingersoll, published in the August number of the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, you lift up your voice in righteous horror at the shocking superstition of the poor Hindoo. You gaze in disgust from the back of your elephant at the "horrible scene of human degradation," enacted in the river at Benares. With indignant protest you cry out that "such a religion, so far from being a purifier, is the greatest corrupter of morals." . . . And finally, in pious abhorrence, you anathematize such a religion as "an immeasurable curse."

Of course, using the words of an eloquent writer, I might tell you that "you swing your sentences as the woodman swings his axe." Or that "this slashing style is very effective before a popular audience, which does not care for nice distinctions, or for evidence that has to be sifted and weighed, but wants opinions off-hand, and likes to have its prejudices and hatreds echoed back in a ringing voice." And I might add that "this carries the crowd, but does not convince the philosophic mind." But I prefer to ask you, "Does it never occur to you that there is something very cruel in this treatment of the belief of your fellow creatures, on whose hope of another life hangs all that relieves the darkness of their present existence?"

When thus inveighing, you forget the same eloquent writer's words that "the faiths of men are as sacred as the most delicate manly or womanly sentiments of love and honor." In your public letter "things that I held sacred you not only rejected with unbelief, but (gratuitously) sneered at with contempt."

Now, I do not propose to argue in favor of this religion or of that. I do not care to make a Hindoo of you, and you cannot make a Christian of me, for I have lived among both Hindoos and Christians, and know them well; besides, I am of the opinion of our Bagavad-Gita, which tells us that "it is good for a man to abide in his own faith, for the faith of another bringeth fear;" but I do claim a fair and impartial statement of facts.

You inform your readers that with the Hindoos "penances and pilgrimages take the place of justice and mercy, benevolence, and charity!" Yet you have been in India. Have you forgotten that so universal is the individual charity of the people that work-houses and poor-laws do not exist? Do you not remember the "choultries" (rest-houses) which are met with every few miles from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin? In some, food is given freely to all comers, but in all the weary wayfarer, irrespective of caste, is sure of free shelter and a bathing tank near at hand. The custom, it is true, owes its origin to Çakya Muni's

gentle teaching, as do so many of the Hindoo rites and thoughts, for although the Brahmins consider Buddha's philosophy as heretical, he has, nevertheless, strange to say, been granted a place in the Hindoo Pantheon, and is an admitted incarnation of Vishnu. Indeed, stranger still, he has been canonized by your Christian Church. But, as Doctor Hunter says so truly, "the noblest survivals of Buddhism in India are to be found, *not in any peculiar body*, but in the religion of the people; in that principle of the brotherhood of man, with the reassertion of which each new revival of Hindooism starts; in the asylum which the great Vaishnavite sect affords to women who have fallen victims to caste rules, to the widow and the outcast; in that gentleness and charity to all men, which take the place of a poor-law in India, and give a high significance to the half-satirical epithet of the 'mild Hindoo.'" Knowing this, is it fair to condemn the sacred creed of millions of your fellow-men as without justice or mercy, benevolence or charity? Is it strictly in accordance with the principles of "justice and mercy, benevolence and charity" to stigmatize such a faith as "*the greatest corrupter of morals?*" Is the religion which teaches the "brotherhood of man," and which practices what it preaches, "*an immeasurable curse?*" "But gently, gently, sir! We will let this burst of fury pass before we resume the conversation." "When you are a little more tranquil, I would modestly suggest that perhaps you are fighting a figment of your imagination."

You profess a great horror for the superstition which induces the Hindoo to wash in the Holy Ganges; but stop a moment: Is it not an imperative necessity that every Christian should be baptized in the sacred water of Jordan (figuratively speaking), the shivering convert being immersed more or less deeply, according to the tenets of the sect to which he or she is to belong? Does not the Catholic sprinkle himself with the Holy Water at the entrance of his church? You shudder at the Hindoos "even carrying the ashes of the dead to cast them upon the waters;" yet pause for a moment and consider your own superstitious horror at burying your beloved dead in any other than consecrated ground! You partake at your altars of bread and wine, calling it the "body and blood of your Lord," while the Hindoo eats his sacrificial cakes before the emblem of his Deity. You make the sign of the cross on your children's foreheads, while the Hindoo mutters his "mantras" and rinses his mouth with Ganga's flood. You confirm your youths and maidens with diverse ceremonies, while the Brahmin stripling is invested with the "sacred thread." You confess or comfort your dying (as the case may be), or administer absolution with the extreme unction, while the expiring Hindoo is sprinkled with water from the Ganges (or any other of the sacred rivers or pools). In either case salvation is promised. The mourning watchers at either bed-side are solemnly convinced that all that is necessary for the future welfare of the departing soul has been accomplished.

It seems to me that all these instances may be fairly pronounced as parallels. If so, is it not illogical to object that one is superstition while the other is not? And do such superstitions "overthrow the very foundations of morality?"

Of course, no person conversant with the subject will drag into the discussion the miserable "suttee," for this blot on Hindooism has no more religious sanction than witch-burning. Although considered by the masses as highly meritorious, it was as purely an act of supererogation as that of Saint Simon Stylites on his pillar.

But, as I have said above, it is not my intention to argue the pros and cons of either system; superstition, unfortunately, exists in both religions—not more so with the uneducated Hindoo than with his low-born Christian brother—but I have no fear but that all who know India will agree with me that the "religion of

humanity" is strongest within the breast of the Asiatic, and that whatever may be its metaphysical errors from a Christian point of view, such a creed cannot in justice be stigmatized as "an immeasurable curse."

The origin of Brahminism is lost in the night of time. Would not the Hindoo, in so far as mere antiquity is concerned, be justified in claiming for his creed what you do for yours, and, making use of your own words, exclaiming, on *his* side: "Why is it that it lives on and on, while nations and kingdoms perish?" "Is not this the survival of the fittest?"

SCRIMAN MADEWA-CHARYAR.

### III.

#### WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH OUR DAUGHTERS?

THE article on working women, by Ida M. Van Etten, in the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW for March, ends with a regret expressed for their condition, the hopelessness of bettering their outlook for lack of capital, and the impossibility of ever saving enough to enable them to establish, even in a small way, a business of their own. I take up Mrs. Van Etten's regret, and will endeavor to show a way in which women would be enabled to have a financial future.

My proposition is meant, not for working women only, but includes every family of moderate means, blessed with daughters.

All over Germany exist what are called "Sparcassen" (saving banks), which correspond, in a measure, to the endowment plan of the American assurance companies. The best known is the "Wilhelmsscasse," named after the Emperor, who is its patron. At the birth of a girl, the father and mother insure her (*kanfen sie ein*) in such a Casse for as much as they are able to bestow every year on the future of their new born baby girl. The amount is paid annually. The Casse lays out the money in behalf of the insured, at interest, chiefly in real estate. In this way the money accumulates, and at 18, or her majority, the girl is the possessor of a snug little capital. This will serve her to study any favored profession, go to some good conservatory, or start in business; and last, but not least, buy her trousseau, if she has a chance to follow woman's truest mission! Now, why cannot well-to-do American women establish such a way of providing for their less fortunate sisters? What a blessed gift from a godmother to a poor little girl such an insurance would be! I truly believe it would give zeal and encouragement to many true, poor parents, if by this small economy they could help to provide for their dear ones. It is better than a life assurance, for it takes away the "sting of death:" all may live and enjoy the fruit of their economy! How much better a yearly outlay would be, for people in moderate circumstances, than in costly toys and extravagant dress, by which children are brought up to expectations.

There is no great capital needed for this "Casse," only the help of some well-known woman! The "Casse" itself would afford employment to many intellectual women, for I advocate the exclusive management by women. This Casse established, women who now slave for large factories at starvation prices could, with the help of their few hundred dollars, establish a work room of their own and, through thrift, again provide in the same way a future for their daughters! And for all classes it would help to solve the puzzling question:

"What shall we do with our daughters?"

E. SHUSTER.

### IV.

#### NO AMERICAN SIBERIA.

MUCH has been said in favor of a project to utilize Alaska as a penal settlement, and to largely substitute exile thither for the penalty of imprisonment in